

MAXIMILIAN SIMONISCHEK

LAUREN LEE SMITH

GRETA SCACCHI

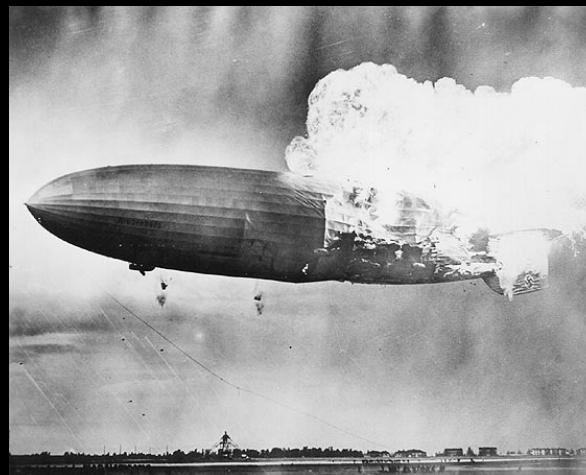
STACEY KEACH



HINDENBURG

“It's practically standing still now. They've dropped ropes out of the nose of the ship; and they've been taken ahold of down on the field by a number of men. It's starting to rain again; it's—the rain had slacked up a little bit. The back motors of the ship are just holding it just enough to keep it from  
— It's burst into flames! It burst into flames, and it's falling, it's crashing! Watch it! Get out of the way! Get out of the way! It's fire - and it's crashing! It's crashing terrible!  
This is the worst of the worst catastrophes in the world!”

- Herbert Morrison describing the events,  
as broadcasted to WLS radio on May 6, 1937 –



## 1. Historical background

### THE DISASTER THAT MARKED THE END OF AN AIRSHIP ERA

One of the most dramatic accidents of modern times, the "Hindenburg Disaster" took the lives of 35 people at Lakehurst, New Jersey and marked the end of the giant passenger-carrying rigid airships. The cause of the accident has never been determined.

- The "Hindenburg Disaster" took place on May 6, 1937 at Lakehurst Naval Air Station in Manchester, New Jersey, USA.
- The German rigid airship caught fire and was destroyed within one minute while attempting to dock.
- Of the 97 people on board, 35 people died in addition to one fatality on the ground.
- The cause of the accident has never been determined, although many theories, some controversial, have been proposed.
- The accident served to shatter public confidence, and marked the end of the giant passenger carrying rigid airships.
- The incident is widely remembered as one of the most dramatic accidents of modern time.

## 2. The Production – International television event of 2009/2010

The acclaimed European Television Event producer Teamworx joining forces with Europe's largest commercial broadcaster RTL and the international experience of BetaFilm

- Dramatic “Titanic of the Air”
- High-tension conspiracy plot with a modern love story linked to the spectacular and dramatic historic background and events
- Exceptional SFX / VFX
- Format: Miniseries 2 x 90'
- Budget: USD 15.000.000
- Shooting language: English
- Script: Philip LaZebnik
- Director: Philip Kadelbach
- Delivery date: Winter 2010



### 3.Cast



Maximilian  
Simonischek  
as  
MERTEN  
KRÖGER



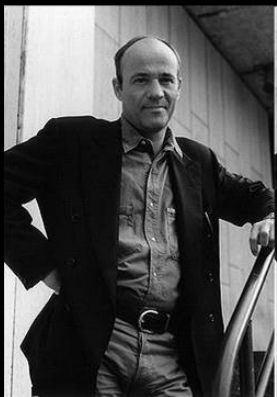
Lauren Lee  
Smith  
as  
JENNIFER  
VAN ZANDT



Greta  
Scacchi  
as  
HELEN  
VAN ZANDT



Stacey  
Keach  
as  
EDWARD  
VAN ZANDT



Heiner  
Lauterbach  
As  
HUGO  
ECKENER



Ulrich  
Noethen  
as  
CAPTAIN  
LEHMANN



Hannes  
Jaenicke  
as  
GILLES  
BROCA



Christiane  
Paul  
as  
ANNA  
KERNER



#### 4. Short plotline

1937. The Hindenburg, the largest airship in the world, is on its first flight to the U.S. To Nazi official Göring, it is a spectacular display of Third Reich engineering and a hidden key to Hitler's war plans. To the Kerners, a Jewish family, it is a chance to flee from Nazi terror and persecution. To the U.S. industrialist and congressman van Zandt, it is a chance to make a lucrative deal with the Germans, but it's a deal with the devil. To airship engineer Merten Kröger it's a dream that becomes a nightmare. He is on board the Hindenburg, madly in love with Jennifer van Zandt, who is also on this fateful flight to Lakehurst, New Jersey. Learning that there is a bomb on board, Merten tries to find it, is beaten up and tied, then wanted for murder. As the Hindenburg approaches the U.S., Merten and Jennifer must outfox the conspirators and defuse the bomb before it can ignite the highly flammable hydrogen and turn the zeppelin into an inferno...



## 5. Plot

### Part 1:

Frankfurt 1937. Merten Kröger, co-constructor of the Hindenburg, undertakes his maiden flight with a self-constructed glider. Everything runs well, but then he crashes into a lake. Jennifer van Zandt, daughter of American businessman Edward van Zandt, witnesses the crash, dives into the water and saves his life. Merten immediately falls in love with her. That night, at a reception hosted by the American consulate, they meet again. The reception's topic is the military trade embargo that hinders the export of helium to Germany. Helium that Dr. Hugo Eckener, the head of the Zeppelin airship company, needs desperately to make his airship safer. He has formed an alliance with Edward and Helen van Zandt to bring down the embargo. Nazi leader Göring supports Eckener, but he also has another agreement with van Zandt. A telegram informs Helen and Jennifer that Edward has suffered another heart attack. His condition seems so serious that the women decide to return to New York on the next day with the Hindenburg. Fritz Rittenberg, son of a noble German family, and Jennifer's fiancé in waiting, will accompany them. Jennifer is devastated by the news and finds comfort with Merten. Edward is informed that his ladies will return on the Hindenburg. He calls Eckener to get them off the ship. Eckener orders Merten to do so, but when he meets Fritz on the way, he is suddenly attacked by him with a knife and after a fight Fritz accidentally dies. With his last words he tells Merten that there is a bomb on board and that Jennifer knows about it. Merten manages to get on board the Hindenburg, which is already lifting off.





On board he is knocked out by someone, who has brought a secret radio transmitter on board. While Jennifer wonders where Fritz is, Merten regains consciousness and is able to free himself. At the same time his Captain, Werner Pruss, receives the message that Merten is probably on board and is wanted for murder. Pruss orders a search, but the size of the ship makes finding one man a difficult task. Merten sneaks into the passenger levels and confronts Jennifer with the bomb news. She doesn't know anything. Helen tells her that Fritz is dead. Merten searches the ship and finds suspicious material in officer Bastian's quarters. Bastian is also there and attacks him. They fight and Merten wins. But Bastian also knows nothing about the bomb. He is looking for a spy and secret documents stolen from Göring. Captain Pruss arrests Merten while Helen van Zandt is talking to an unknown man - apparently the bomber. She is in on the bomb conspiracy and tells him to retune the bomb, because the Hindenburg is delayed due to bad weather over the Atlantic Ocean. In New York Edward is visited by Singer, a German diplomat and spy, who knows about the bomb and pressures van Zandt not to get in their way, otherwise Helen and Jennifer will not survive the trip, no matter if the Zeppelin explodes or not



HINDENBURG



BETA

## Part 2:

Merten is questioned and beaten by Bastian, who works for the SS and shows no patience. He suspects Merten to have the stolen documents. Jennifer finds a humidor key in Fritz's belongings and, together with Pruss, they find dynamite sticks inside Fritz's cigar box in the smoking lounge. One stick is clearly missing. Pruss halts Bastian's brutal interrogation and orders him to find the bomb. Bastian agrees to support them. Everybody on board is now suspicious, except the Kerners, a Jewish family escaping from the Nazis. One of Merten's colleagues comes to him asking to hide some papers. Merten realizes that these are the papers that the SS is looking for. But he decides to hide them. He trusts his colleague more than Bastian. He reads the papers and discovers that Göring is not after the helium but a fuel additive for planes which van Zandt is producing as well. Hitler needs this fuel to develop his war plans. Piece by piece Merten and Jennifer put the puzzle together. But then they find Bastian's body in one of the cabins. He has been stabbed. The proof leads to passenger Max Kaufmann, who built the bomb in his cabin. Kaufmann tries to escape and falls off the Zeppelin into the ocean before he can tell them where the bomb is.





Together with Merten, Jennifer realizes that her mother knew about the bomb all along. Helen tries to defend herself, but Jennifer is profoundly dispirited and joins forces with Merten to find the bomb. Helen knows that now the bomb's timer cannot be changed anymore and that the Hindenburg will be blown to pieces before a safe landing. Captain Pruss immediately orders a faster landing and steers the Zeppelin right into the storm over Lakehurst, where Edward is expecting his family. Singer asks him to talk to the press after the expected inferno. Merten finally realizes where the bomb could be placed and finds it at the last moment on the outside of the Hindenburg, sewn into a pocket. He defuses it. Pruss risks a heavy landing and the Hindenburg's frame nearly collapses. This tears a hole into one of the gas pockets. The thunderstorm produces a St. Elmo's fire which ignites the gas. The Hindenburg starts to burn. Most of the passengers realize it too late. Some, in flames, jump off the ship. Jennifer is saved by Merten. Helen decides to stay on the ship and dies. The Hindenburg collapses onto the airfield. Edward realizes that he risked too much. But then he sees Jennifer carried by Merten coming towards him. Jennifer tells him that Helen is dead. Then some medics take her away. Merten calls Edward a murderer and leaves. Edward decides to tell the truth to the press, but Singer informs him that he kidnapped Jennifer and that he had better tell the press what Singer wants to hear. Merten realizes that Singer will need to get hold of the papers with Hitler's war plans. He offers the papers, which have been destroyed on the Hindenburg, to Singer in exchange for Jennifer. The trick works. Eckener arrives in New York and helps Merten to organize the exchange at the von Zandt mansion. Eckener insults Edward for playing this foul game. Singer releases Jennifer, but he acts under Göring's order to kill all confidants. Jennifer breaks with her father, who finally realizes his failure. Singer takes out a gun to kill Jennifer, but Edward shoots Singer first. Then he asks everyone out of the room and kills himself. Merten and Jennifer start a new life in America.







## 8. Facts and Figures

Hindenburg made 17 round trips across the Atlantic Ocean in 1936, its first and only full year of service, with 10 trips to the U.S. and seven to Brazil. In July 1936, the airship also completed a record Atlantic double crossing in five days, 19 hours and 51 minutes.

After defeating Joe Louis, the German boxer Max Schmeling returned home on the Hindenburg to a hero's welcome in Frankfurt.

The airship flew 308,323 km (191,583 miles) with 2,798 passengers and 160 tons of freight and mail during the season, and its success encouraged the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin Company to plan the expansion of its airship fleet and transatlantic services.

One year to the day before it crashed, the Hindenburg departed Germany on 6 May on its first of 10 North American flights flown in 1936 and arrived in Lakehurst, New Jersey three days later.

Passengers observed that the ship was so stable (a pen or pencil reportedly could be stood on a table without falling) that some missed the take off and believed the ship was still on the ground.

The cost of a ticket between Germany and Lakehurst was US\$400 (about US\$5,900 in 2008 dollars.), which was quite a considerable sum for the Depression era. Hindenburg passengers were generally affluent, including many leaders of industry.



## 8. Facts and Figures

### Use of Hydrogen instead of Helium

The incident is widely remembered as one of the most dramatic accidents of modern time. The cause of the accident has never been determined, although many theories, some highly controversial, have been proposed. However, it is commonly accepted that had the Hindenburg been filled with helium, as opposed to hydrogen, the disaster would not have occurred.

Helium was initially selected for the lifting gas as it was the safest to use in airships (nonflammable). At the time it was extremely expensive, available only from one or two mines in the United States under military control. Hydrogen, by comparison, could be cheaply produced by anyone and had considerably more lift.

The American rigid airships using helium were forced to conserve the gas at all costs and this hampered their operation. While a hydrogen-filled ship could routinely valve gas as necessary, a helium-filled ship had to resort to dynamic force if it was too light to descend, a measure which took a toll on its structure.

Initially the United States was willing to sell helium to the Germans, but soon a military embargo against Germany forced the re-engineering of the Hindenburg to use hydrogen for lift. Although the danger of using hydrogen (highly flammable) was obvious, there were no alternative gases that could be produced in sufficient quantities.

The Germans' long history of flying hydrogen-filled passenger airships without a single injury or fatality engendered a widely-held belief that they had mastered the safe use of hydrogen. While the decision to fly with hydrogen may appear incredibly dangerous today it can be seen as quite reasonable at the time. The Hindenburg's stunning first season performance appeared to demonstrate this conclusively.



